

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count (March 11-12)

Q: What is the Homeless Count?

The Metro Vancouver Homeless Count takes place over a 24-hour period to address the needs of people who are homeless in the region through policy development, planning, and prioritizing programs and services. It includes a shelter and street component as described below. The shelter count will take place during the evening of Tuesday, March 11 and on the streets on Wednesday, March 12, 2014.

Tuesday, March 11, 2014 Shelter Count	Wednesday, March 12, 2014 Street Count
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A count and brief surveys with people staying overnight in emergency shelters, transition houses for women fleeing violence, youth safe houses and detox facilities by trained volunteers or staff.• Basic data on people with No Fixed Address who are in a hospital or corrections facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A count and brief surveys with homeless people who are unsheltered (living outside, including in alleys, doorways, parkades, parks and vehicles) or who are couch surfing and using homelessness services on March 12.

Because the count takes place over a 24-hour period, it provides a 'snapshot' of individuals and families who are homeless and is sometimes referred to as a point-in-time count. At least 650 volunteers throughout Metro Vancouver are expected to participate in the count.

Q: Why do we need to count people who are homeless?

The purpose of the Homeless Count is to estimate the number of people who are street and sheltered homeless, obtain a demographic profile of this population, and identify trends compared to previous counts. This information is important so governments and service providers can plan and fund appropriate programs to address homelessness and to measure our progress in reducing homelessness. We want to know: has the situation in Metro Vancouver improved, deteriorated or stayed the same?

Q: Who is considered 'homeless' in the Homeless Count?

People are considered homeless if they do not have a place of their own where they could expect to stay for more than 30 days and if they do not pay rent. This includes people in the categories below.

Unsheltered homeless. People living 'outside', including in alleys, doorways, parkades, parks and vehicles.

Sheltered homeless. People staying in emergency shelters for the homeless, transition houses for women fleeing violence, and safe houses for youth. This category also includes people with no fixed address who are in health, correction and detox facilities – where the length of stay is less than 30 days.

Hidden homeless. People who do not have a regular address of their own where they have security of tenure and who are staying temporarily in another household. This category includes people who are 'couch surfing'. The hidden homeless will probably not be counted in a homeless count if they do not use a homelessness service during the 24-hour period.

Q: Will you make an effort to count homeless youth?

Yes. The goal is to engage and involve youth, youth outreach workers and agencies that work with youth who are homeless and at risk of homelessness.

Q: Will you make an effort to count Aboriginal people who are homeless?

Yes. Our methodology includes an Aboriginal strategy to recruit Aboriginal volunteers to interview Aboriginal people who are homeless.

Q: How do we count people who are living on the street?

Volunteers, working in teams of 2, will go to places where people who are living on the street are likely to spend some time, such as meal programs, bottle depots, drop-in centres, as well as certain streets, alleys, doorways, parkades, parks and in parked vehicles.

Area Coordinators throughout Metro Vancouver are responsible for assigning volunteer interviewers to visit pre-identified locations where people who are homeless are likely to be. Interviewers will conduct an anonymous survey with people who are homeless in their assigned area. They will introduce themselves, ask for the person's consent to be interviewed, ask questions to determine if the person is homeless, and find out if the person has already been interviewed. If the person meets our definition of being homeless and has not already been interviewed, and agrees to the interview, the volunteer will proceed with the survey.

Q: How do we count people who are “couch surfing”?

As part of the street count, couch surfers *may* be surveyed at various locations like bottle depots, drop-in centres, meal programs, and street corners, etc. However, if someone does not use a homelessness service during the count, they will probably not be included. Outreach workers are asked to spread the word and urge people who are couch surfing to go to designated locations so they can be interviewed.

Q: How will you achieve an accurate count of people who are homeless?

Homeless counts have taken place in Metro Vancouver every three years since 2002 and every year in Vancouver since 2010. The count methodology is refined with every count and the 2014 Count will build on past experience and the expertise of outreach workers and others in the community. Our goal is to include as many people who are homeless as possible. However, all counts of people who are homeless are by their nature conservative estimates. The Homeless Count report will explain the methodology and emphasize that the numbers are likely an undercount.

Q: How long will the street count take?

The street count will begin early in the morning – as early as 5:00 am in some communities. It generally ends by around 10:00 p.m. Times may vary by City.

Q: What about safety during the count?

Interviewer safety is paramount. All interviewers will work in teams of two, led by a person with experience working with people who are homeless and a general knowledge of the geographic area to be covered. Interviewers will be trained in how to do the work safely and comfortably.

Q: Who is responsible for the count?

The Homeless Count is an initiative of the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH). Metro Vancouver is conducting the Homeless Count on behalf of the RSCH. Funding has been provided by Service Canada, the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Foundation, Real Estate Foundation of BC, and Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society.

Q: How can I help?

Volunteers: The Homeless Count will need volunteers, so if you are able to volunteer or know others who are interested and have experience working with people who are homeless, please complete the [on-line application form](#).

If you have any questions, please contact: HomelessCount@metrovancouver.org